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REPRESENTATIVE PICTURE

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PAKISTAN EYEING INDIA-LIKE DEAL WITH RUSSIA FOR CHEAP OIL

Cash-strapped country set to place its first order for Russian crude next month, its petroleum minister said on Sunday

FIRST SHIPMENT TO BE A TEST CARGO

The first shipment is expected to be a test cargo as Russia demanded the impoverished country to import at least one cargo of oil to prove its intent and ability to bring in Russian crude — given the logistic challenges. A final agreement is expected after the first shipment reaches Pakistan, which currently imports much of its oil from the UAE and Saudi Arabia

MOSCOW IN TIGHT SPOT DUE TO E.U. EMBARGO

- While there is no clarity on the final price, Pakistan said it was getting a discount as much as any other neighbour— a likely reference to India. It initially sought a 30% discount, which Russia rejected
- But the talks have progressed, with Moscow eager to find buyers for its crude after the EU imposed an embargo and price cap on its crude

28 days

IS HOW LONG IT TAKES FOR RUSSIAN CRUDE OIL TO REACH PAKISTAN

CHENNAI • MADURAI • VIJAYAWADA • BENGALURU • KOCHI • HYDERABAD • VISAKHAPATNAM • COIMBATORE • KOZHIKODE • THIRUVANANTHAPURAM • BELAGAVI • BHUBANESWAR • SHIVAMOGGA • MANGALURU • TIRUPATI • TRICHY • TIRUNELVELI • SAMBALPUR • HUBBALLI • DHARMAPURI • KOTTAYAM • KANNUR • VILLUPURAM • KOLLAM • TADEPALLIGUDEM • NAGAPATTINAM • THRISSUR • KALABURAGI

Rahul to file appeal against defamation case verdict

DILIP SINGH KSHATRIYA
@ Ahmedabad

CONGRESS leader Rahul Gandhi will file an appeal in the Surat sessions court on Monday against his conviction in a criminal defamation case. The plea is likely to come up for hearing on Monday, when the former Congress president will also be present in the court.

On March 23, the court of Chief Judicial Magistrate H H Varma convicted Gandhi and sentenced him to two years in jail in a 2019 criminal defamation case filed against him over his remarks on Modi surname. It had held 52-year-old

guilty under Indian Penal Code sections 499 and 500. The court had also granted him bail and suspended the sentence for 30 days to enable him to appeal in a higher court. On March 24, Rahul was disqualified from the Lok Sabha.

According to sources, the 168-page Surat court judgment has been translated by experts, and the petition is ready for filing. Rahul Gandhi will arrive at the sessions court to submit the appeal at 3 pm, his attorney Kirit Panwala said. He will be accompanied by a team of expert lawyers and Congress leaders.

The defamation suit against Rahul Gandhi was filed by Purnesh Modi, a BJP MLA and former minister in Gujarat, for his comment: "How come all thieves have the common Modi surname?" which he had made while campaigning for the 2019 Lok Sabha elections in Karnataka.

According to the Congress, he was targeting Prime Minister Narendra Modi for having the same surname as fugitive businessman Nirav Modi and former IPL chief Lalit Modi.

Reacting to the news, BJP national spokesperson Shehzad Poonawalla said: "This is a welcome step. Though delayed, the Congress has shown faith in the judicial system."

Shah raps Nitish for Ram Navami clashes in Bihar

Says rioters running amok; they will be hung upside down if BJP comes to power in state

RAMASHANKAR @ Patna

WITH the communal violence during Ram Navami celebrations lingering for the fourth straight day, Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday lit into rioters warning them of dire consequences for their actions. Castigating Bihar CM Nitish Kumar for the violent clashes in Sasaram and Biharsharif cities, where one person was killed and many were injured in gunfire, bomb blast and stone pelting, Shah said the situation would be different if the BJP was in power.

Addressing a public meeting at Inter School ground in Hisua in Nawada district, Shah said: "Rioters have been on the prowl in Biharsharif and Sasaram. They will be hung upside down if the BJP forms government in Bihar in 2025."

Incidents of arson and looting were reported from the two towns with vehicles, houses and shops being torched and several people injured.

Shah had to cancel his proposed tour of Sasaram on Sunday, in view of the fluid law and order situation. Prohibitory orders have been put in place in the area since Friday after eruption of fresh clashes.

Targeting Nitish for failing to act against the troublemakers, the Union minister said: "I am concerned since you are not able to handle the situation. I am the Union Home Minister and Bihar's law and order is my concern as well."

If lawlessness prevails in Bihar, I cannot be a mute spectator. The state is a part of the country

Amit Shah, Union home minister

Shah also spoke to Bihar governor Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar, which triggered a series high-level interactions in Patna. CM Nitish Kumar called an urgent meeting of top police officials and directed them to identify and initiate prompt action against the culprits.

The officials were also asked to crack down on rumour mongers and bust fake news being spread through social media.

According to police, 109 people have been arrested so far in connection with the clashes.

Meanwhile, nine companies of central armed police force have arrived in the state to assist the local administration restore peace in trouble-torn districts. The central forces were subsequently dispatched to Sasaram and Biharsharif.

FAMED PUPPETEER

Nadoja Belagallu Veeranna dies in car accident

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Chitradurga/Ballari

NADOJA Belagallu Veeranna (91), a veteran Togalu Gombe artiste (puppeteer) and theatre personality, died in a road accident near Hirehalli village in Chitradurga district on Sunday morning.

The car in which he was travelling overturned when his son BV Hanumantha, who was driving it, tried to avoid a stray dog on Bidar-Srirangapatna national highway, according to a complaint filed by Veeranna's elder son Prakash. Veeranna and Hanumantha suffered serious injuries and were shifted to Challakere taluk hospital around 8.45 am, where the doctors declared him brought dead. Hanumantha is undergoing treatment.

The body was handed over to his family members after conducting a post-mortem. The cremation will take place at Belagallu village on Monday.

Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai, Union Minister Pralhad Joshi, district in-charge minister B Sriramulu and many senior artistes, including Manjamma Jogati, Padma award winner, mourned Veeranna.

Veeranna was born on July 6, 1936 at Siganahalli village in Ballari district. He started acting in street plays when he was 10. Later, he learnt Togalu Gombeyata (puppetry) and started performing it.

Veeranna's "Panchavati Katha Prasanga" created history in terms of number of shows in Bengaluru.

In 1998, he performed a show on Mahatma Gandhi at Rashtrapati Bhavan.

In 1991, he was honoured with the Nadoja award.

He received the Rajyotsava award in 1992.

In 2014, he received the President's award for Togalu Gombeyata. He was selected as Ballari district SVEEP ambassador for the Assembly elections in May.

BJP releases 1st episode of *Congress Files* series, says grand old party looted ₹4.82 lakh cr

New Delhi: Ahead of the expected high-pitched 2024 general elections, the Bharatiya Janata Party on Sunday launched a frontal attack on the Congress by releasing the first episode of a well-drafted video series titled *Congress Files* dubbed in Hindi. The saffron party alleged that Congress means 'corruption' and accused the Grand Old Party of looting people's money during its rule in the country between 2004 and 2014. In the video, the BJP accuses the Congress of having committed corruption and scams worth as much as ₹48,20,69,00,00,000, calling it "dacoity of public money". The party also called the 10-year period between 2004 and 2014 "a lost decade"

FULL STORY PAGE 7

The Reusable Launch Vehicle used for autonomous landing in Chitradurga, Karnataka | ISRO

ISRO'S RLV SUCCESS TO CUT LAUNCH COSTS BY 80%

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Chitradurga

THE Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) on Sunday landed its Reusable Launch Vehicle (RLV) in an autonomous mode, demonstrating its capability of using such spacecraft to deliver low-earth orbit satellites in space and return to the ground for reuse in a subsequent mission.

This is expected to cut the costs of satellite launching missions by 80%.

The successful experiment, called Reusable Launch Vehicle Autonomous Landing Mission (RLV-LEX), was carried out at the Aeronautical Test Range (ATR) of the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) in Challakere in Karnataka's Chitradurga district.

At 7.10 am, a Chinook Helicopter of the Indian Air Force carried a winged RLV (a space plane) and flew to a height of 4.5 km to a predetermined spot. It released the RLV from that height, which then carried out a precise autonomous landing on the runway at DRDO's ATR in Challakere.

The technique used to launch the vehicle was "a first in the world" where a winged body was carried to an altitude of 4.5 km by helicopter and released for carrying out an autonomous landing on a runway.

"The autonomous landing was carried out under the exact conditions of Space Reentry vehicle's landing," the space agency tweeted. **P5**

Cow vigilantes 'lynch' man at Sathanur, five booked

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Bengaluru

A gang of cow vigilantes allegedly lynched the driver of a vehicle transporting cattle at Sathanur near Kanakapura in Ramanagara district in the wee hours of Saturday. Police have booked Punith Kerehalli, a right-wing activist, and four others for murder. They are absconding. The body of the victim, Idrees Pasha (39), a resident of Mandya, was found a few hundred metres away from Sathanur police station.

Police said Pasha along with Irfan and Syed Zaheer was transporting 15 cattle in a vehicle when they were waylaid by the gang members in a car near Santemala Circle around 11.45 pm on Friday. Sensing danger, Pasha and Irfan escaped while Zaheer was caught and allegedly assaulted. The accused allegedly told him that they (Muslims) should not live here and must go to Pakistan. Kerehalli allegedly demanded Rs 2 lakh and threatened to finish him off if he didn't pay them. Though Zaheer tried to explain to the gang members that the cattle were purchased and were being taken to Tamil Nadu, they allegedly assaulted him.

The police rushed to the spot and took both parties to the station, where Kerehalli lodged a complaint accusing them of illegally transporting cattle. A counter complaint was also filed against Kerehalli.

On Saturday morning, after the body of Pasha was found, his family members staged a protest in front of the police station demanding that the accused be arrested. Ramanagara SP Karthik Reddy said the accused, including Kerehalli, are yet to be arrested. The police are awaiting the postmortem report to know the reasons for the death of Pasha, he added.

The family members of Pasha, however, alleged that the cow vigilantes had tortured him to death as there were assault marks all over his body.

Who is Punith Kerehalli?

Punith Kerehalli is a right-wing activist, who has started an organisation Rashtra Rakshana Pade. He actively took part in the boycott of halal meat campaign sometime ago. He had also organised a campaign asking Hindus not to do business with Muslims.

Stray dog found with a newborn in its mouth at Shivamogga hospital

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Shivamogga

AN incident of a stray dog running around with a newborn baby in its mouth has been reported from McGann Teaching District Hospital here.

The dog was found carrying the newborn in its mouth in the wee hours of March 31, but the incident came to light on Sunday.

A woman security guard has filed a police complaint in this regard. In her complaint, the guard stated that immediately after she came for work at 6 am, some people informed her that they saw a stray dog running around carrying the newborn baby in its mouth. They also informed her that the dog came from the building housing maternity wards. When she went to the building, she saw the dog still holding the baby in its mouth. The baby was found dead by then.

McGann Teaching District Hospital in Shivamogga

I have asked the hospital officials to submit a report in 3 days on all deliveries at government and private hospitals in the city in the last 15 days

Rajesh Suraghalli, district health officer

The guard suspected that the baby might have died sometime after its birth. The baby might have been born out of an illicit relationship and the woman left home leaving the dead infant in the hospital. The Doddapete police have registered a case. It is yet to be ascertained whether the dog had killed the baby.

District health officer Rajesh Suragihalli said that the postmortem has been conducted. The body weighed 900 grams. He suspected it to be a premature delivery and it did not happen at McGann Hospital. Three teams have been formed to investigate the matter.

"I have instructed the hospital officials to submit a report in three days after collecting information on all deliveries at government and private hospitals in the city in the last 15 days," he said.

SIMS medical superintendent Shridhar suspected that someone from outside might have kept the baby on the hospital premises. Investigations are on, he said.

The police said that samples will soon be sent to the FSA laboratory in Davanagere for a DNA test.

4 Indians

Among 8 dead trying to enter US illegally

Canadian police have named two of 8 people, including 4 Indians, whose bodies were found along the US-Canada border | **P8**

ROYAL TREATMENT

Virat Kohli (82*) and Faf du Plessis (73) dished out a chasing masterclass with a 148-run partnership as RCB demolished MI in Bengaluru on Sunday | VINODKUMARY

EXPRESS READ

Clashes in Bengal during Ram Navami rally

Kolkata: The communal violence that erupted in West Bengal's Howrah spread to Hooghly district on Sunday evening during a Ram Navami procession taken out by BJP's national V-P Dilip Ghosh and several MLAs. Ghosh was taken out of the area by CRPF personnel | **P8**

States' job to implement menstrual health scheme

New Delhi: The Centre has told the Supreme Court that it is dedicated to improve access to menstrual hygiene for young and adolescent girls but the responsibility of providing healthcare services lies with the respective state governments as public health is a state subject | **P7**

THE FINAL OVER

Rare talent, Durani's swashbuckling innings comes to an end

BISHAN SINGH BEDI
Former India captain

I was shocked and sad to hear the demise of my dear friend and great cricketer Salim Durani. The legend has definitely gone. Durani's demise is a great loss for the game and a personal loss for me.

I have known him for decades both as a player and person and he was one of the most humble human beings one can ever see. Tall and handsome, Durani was a delight to watch and had the ability to demolish any bowling attack on his day. To match that, he was a good bowler too. A rarity those days. When we were young and had not got to see much of him we used to hear from all cricketers about Durani's six-hitting ability.

Later we played a lot together and became close. Durani was one of the nicest people around. A totally unselfish cricketer and always a team man.

SALIM DURANI
11 DECEMBER 1934 • 2 APRIL 2023

Durani was equally good as a bowler and his exploits against England are part of folklore. He could fox the best of batters with his bowling. He was also an intelligent bowler. He was a complete package — he could bat, bowl and field exceptionally well and was a true legend in every sense.

When he was dropped, there used to be banners "No Durani and No Test". That showed the love and affection that the public had for him. With the advent of T20 and IPL many people often ask me whether Durani would have been able to adapt to the modern times.

Well, Durani would have certainly adapted as he was a gifted cricketer. With his ability to bat, bowl and field every team would have loved to have him in their ranks. He would have certainly succeeded.

It is indeed a very great loss for all of us, may his soul rest in peace. **P11**

(As told to Ashok Venugopal)